

September 7, 2006

**AO DRAFT COMMENT PROCEDURES**

The Commission permits the submission of written public comments on draft advisory opinions when proposed by the Office of General Counsel and scheduled for a future Commission agenda.

Today, DRAFT ADVISORY OPINION 2006-22 is available for public comments under this procedure. It was requested by, Andrius R. Kontrimas, Esq., on behalf of Wallace for Congress.

Proposed Advisory Opinion 2006-22 is scheduled to be on the Commission's agenda for its public meeting of Thursday, September 14, 2006.

Please note the following requirements for submitting comments:

1) Comments must be submitted in writing to the Commission Secretary with a duplicate copy to the Office of General Counsel. Comments in legible and complete form may be submitted by fax machine to the Secretary at (202) 208-3333 and to OGC at (202) 219-3923.

2) The deadline for the submission of comments is 12:00 noon (Eastern Time) on September 13, 2006.

3) No comments will be accepted or considered if received after the deadline. Late comments will be rejected and returned to the commenter. Requests to extend the comment period are discouraged and unwelcome. An extension request will be considered only if received before the comment deadline and then only on a case-by-case basis in special circumstances.

4) All timely received comments will be distributed to the Commission and the Office of General Counsel. They will also be made available to the public at the Commission's Public Records Office.

### **CONTACTS**

Press inquiries: Robert Biersack (202) 694-1220

Commission Secretary: Mary Dove (202) 694-1040

Other inquiries:

To obtain copies of documents related to AO 2006-22, contact the Public Records Office at (202) 694-1120 or (800) 424-9530.

For questions about comment submission procedures, contact Rosemary C. Smith, Associate General Counsel, at (202) 694-1650.

### **MAILING ADDRESSES**

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FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION  
Washington, DC 20463

September 7, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Commission

THROUGH: Patrina M. Clark  
Staff Director

FROM: Lawrence H. Norton  
General Counsel

Rosemary C. Smith  
Associate General Counsel

Amy L. Rothstein  
Acting Assistant General Counsel

Jonathan M. Levin  
Senior Attorney

Subject: Draft AO 2006-22

Attached is a proposed draft of the subject advisory opinion. We request that this draft be placed on the agenda for September 14, 2006.

Attachment

1 ADVISORY OPINION 2006-22

2  
3 Andrius R. Kontrimas, Esquire  
4 Jenkins & Gilchrist  
5 1401 McKinney  
6 Suite 2600  
7 Houston, Texas 77010-4034

**DRAFT**

8  
9 Dear Mr. Kontrimas:

10 We are responding to your advisory opinion request on behalf of Wallace for Congress  
11 (“the Wallace Committee”) concerning the application of the Federal Election Campaign Act of  
12 1971, as amended (the “Act”), and Commission regulations to an incorporated law firm’s  
13 preparation of an *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of the Wallace Committee, free of charge, in a  
14 court case addressing the ballot eligibility of the Republican nominee in Mr. Wallace’s  
15 congressional district. Specifically, you ask whether the value of the legal services provided free  
16 of charge by your law firm would be an in-kind contribution to the Wallace Committee.

17 The Commission concludes that the law firm’s provision of free legal services would be a  
18 prohibited corporate contribution to the Wallace Committee.

19 ***Background***  
20

21 The facts presented in this advisory opinion are based on your letter received on July 21,  
22 2006, and public records, including the Wallace Committee’s 2006 July Quarterly Report filed  
23 with the Commission and the Wallace Committee’s website.

24 The Wallace Committee is the principal campaign committee of David G. Wallace, who  
25 was seeking election to the House of Representatives from the 22<sup>nd</sup> congressional district of  
26 Texas. You are the Wallace Committee’s treasurer. You are also a shareholder in the  
27 incorporated law firm retained by the Wallace Committee to draft the *amicus* brief, Jenkins &  
28 Gilchrist (the “Firm”).

1           *1. The court case*

2           On March 7, 2006, the incumbent Representative, Tom DeLay, won the Republican  
3           primary for the House seat for the 22<sup>nd</sup> congressional district. On April 3, 2006, after declaring  
4           his intention to move to Virginia, Representative Delay announced that he would retire from the  
5           House, effective in early June, and would not seek re-election. After receiving a letter from  
6           Representative DeLay asserting his ineligibility to remain on the ballot because of his move to  
7           Virginia, the Chair of the Republican Party of Texas declared in writing, on June 7, that  
8           Representative DeLay was no longer eligible to be the party's nominee. When a nominee is no  
9           longer eligible to be the nominee, Texas law allows the Republican executive committee for the  
10          affected congressional district to select a replacement candidate for the general election ballot.

11          In anticipation of the withdrawal of Mr. DeLay's name from the ballot, Mr. Wallace filed  
12          his Statement of Candidacy with the Commission on April 17, 2006. The Wallace Committee  
13          filed its Statement of Organization on April 24, 2006.

14          On June 8, 2006, the Texas Democratic Party filed a lawsuit in State court, contesting the  
15          declaration of Mr. DeLay's ineligibility on constitutional grounds. *See Texas Democratic Party*  
16          *v. Benkiser*, No. D-1-GN-06-002089 (Dist. Ct. Travis County, Texas, June 8, 2006). After  
17          removal of the case to Federal court, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas  
18          held the declaration of ineligibility to be invalid, and permanently enjoined the Republican Party  
19          of Texas from certifying to the Texas Secretary of State any candidate other than Mr. DeLay to  
20          appear as the Republican candidate on the general election ballot. *See Texas Democratic Party*  
21          *v. Benkiser*, \_\_ F. Supp. \_\_, 2006 WL 1851295 (W.D. Tex. July 6, 2006). The U.S. Court of  
22          Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld the District Court decision and the injunction. *See Texas*

1 *Democratic Party v. Benkiser*, \_\_\_ F.3d \_\_\_, 2006 WL 2170160 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. August 3, 2006).<sup>1</sup> On  
2 August 9, 2006, Mr. Wallace announced that he intended to qualify, under Texas law, as a  
3 “write-in candidate” for the House seat in the 2006 general election.<sup>2</sup> On August 21, 2006, Mr.  
4 Wallace announced that he no longer intended to pursue a write-in candidacy and withdrew from  
5 the House race.<sup>3</sup>

6 If the Court of Appeals’ injunction had been stayed and the declaration of Mr. DeLay’s  
7 ineligibility had been given effect, the Republican Party executive committee for the 22<sup>nd</sup>  
8 congressional district, composed of precinct chairs, would have met to select a replacement  
9 House candidate for the November ballot. Mr. Wallace was a contender for the nomination.

## 10 2. *The Firm’s services*

11 On July 11, 2006, the Firm entered into a legal representation agreement with the  
12 Wallace Committee. The Firm agreed to submit an *amicus curiae* brief to the Fifth Circuit Court  
13 of Appeals supporting reversal of the District Court judgment on constitutional grounds. The  
14 agreement specified that the Firm would seek an advisory opinion from the Commission as to  
15 whether the preparation of the brief without charge would be a contribution from the Firm to the  
16 Wallace Committee. If the Commission determined that it would be a contribution, the Wallace  
17 Committee would pay the Firm “a normal fee” for such services. The Wallace Committee  
18 agreed, in any event, to pay all routine expenses, such as photocopies and postage. You and the

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<sup>1</sup> On August 7, 2006, Justice Antonin Scalia of the U.S. Supreme Court denied a request for a stay of the injunction, and the Republican Party of Texas reportedly considers its legal options to be “exhausted.” Bob Dunn, *Scalia Denies GOP’s Last Stab At Dropping DeLay From Ballot*, FortBendNow, August 7, 2006, available at <http://www.fortbendnow.com/news/1627/scalia-denies-gops-last-stab-at-having-delay-declared-ineligible-for-ballot> (last visited August 21, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See Kristen Mack, *Sugar Land Mayor To Be Write-in For DeLay’s Seat*, Houston Chronicle, August 10, 2006, available at <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/nb/fortbend/news/4105411.html> (last visited August 21, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See Eric Hanson and Ruth Rendon, *Sugar Land Mayor Quits District 22 Race*, Houston Chronicle, August 22, 2006, available at <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/headline/metro/4132280.html> (last visited August 22, 2006).

other Firm employees who provided the services will be compensated as usual by the Firm for your work. The Wallace Committee's *amicus* brief was filed on July 21, 2006.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Question Presented***

*Would the Firm's preparation, free of charge, of an amicus brief on behalf of the Wallace Committee be a contribution to the Committee, where the brief sought reversal of a Federal court judgment that declared the current nominee of the candidate's party eligible for the ballot and thereby precluded Mr. Wallace's eligibility for the party's nomination?*<sup>5</sup>

### ***Legal Analysis and Conclusions***

Yes, the Firm's preparation of an *amicus* brief free of charge for the Wallace Committee would be a contribution to the Wallace Committee and, because the Firm is a corporation, would be impermissible.

Corporations are prohibited from making any "contribution or expenditure." 2 U.S.C. 441b(a); 11 CFR 114.2(b). The Act defines the term "contribution" in two ways. First, the Act defines "contribution" to include "any gift, subscription, loan, advance, or deposit of money or anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office." 2 U.S.C. 431(8)(A)(i). Second, the Act defines "contribution" to include the "payment by any person of compensation for the personal services of another person which are rendered to a political committee without charge *for any purpose*." 2 U.S.C. 431(8)(A)(ii) (emphasis added); *see also* 2 U.S.C. 441b(b)(2). The situation presented here implicates the second definition.

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<sup>4</sup> Under the Firm's normal billing procedures, bills for work performed in July are processed in August and sent in September, with payment expected within 30 days of the client's receipt of the bill. Hence, the request pertains to future activity by the Wallace Committee. *See* 11 CFR 112.1(b).

<sup>5</sup> Your advisory opinion request included a second question, concerning the possible establishment of a legal expense fund to pay for the Firm's services. You withdrew this question from Commission consideration on August

1 Similarly, Commission regulations provide that, with some exceptions, the “payment by  
2 any person of compensation for the personal services of another person if those services are  
3 rendered without charge to a political committee *for any purpose*” is a contribution to the  
4 political committee. 11 CFR 100.54 (emphasis added); *see also* 11 CFR 114.2(b)(1). The  
5 Firm’s provision of free legal services to the Wallace Committee would not come within the  
6 exception to the definition of “contribution” for legal services provided solely to ensure  
7 compliance with the Act or the presidential campaign funding provisions of Title 26. *See* 2  
8 U.S.C. 431(8)(B)(viii)(II); 11 CFR 100.86 and 114.1(a)(2)(vii). Nor would they come within the  
9 exception for services provided without compensation by an individual volunteer on behalf of a  
10 candidate or political committee. *See* 2 U.S.C. 431(8)(B)(i); 11 CFR 100.74.

11 You contend that Mr. Wallace was not a candidate but merely a potential candidate when  
12 the Firm rendered its legal services to the Wallace Committee, because no district committee  
13 selection process had yet been scheduled. Under the Act and Commission regulations, a  
14 “candidate” is “an individual who seeks nomination for election, or election, to Federal office.”  
15 2 U.S.C. 431(2); 11 CFR 100.3(a). An individual becomes a candidate for Federal office when  
16 that individual, or a person acting on the candidate’s behalf and with his or her consent, “has  
17 received contributions aggregating in excess of \$5,000 or made expenditures aggregating in  
18 excess of \$5,000.” 11 CFR 100.3(a)(1) and (2); *see* 2 U.S.C. 431(2)(A) and (B). According to  
19 its 2006 July Quarterly Report, the Wallace Committee raised over \$200,000 in contributions  
20 before July 1 and spent over \$45,000, including \$20,000 for a “radio buy.” Moreover, as of  
21 August 1, 2006, its website, davidwallaceforcongress.com, made clear that Mr. Wallace  
22 considered himself a candidate for election to the House in 2006. For example, the website (i)

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23, 2006, and explained that the Wallace Committee would prefer to pay for the legal services out of its available



1 asked readers to contact precinct chairs in support of his nomination; (ii) attacked the  
2 Democratic general election candidate in a number of articles; (iii) posted a committee radio ad  
3 expressly advocating Mr. Wallace's election and the Democratic candidate's defeat; and (iv)  
4 noted that, prior to July 1, Mr. Wallace received commitments for \$800,000 in contributions,  
5 over and above the amounts already received.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Mr. Wallace was a Federal candidate at the  
6 time the Firm rendered its services, and the Wallace Committee, as Mr. Wallace's principal  
7 campaign committee, was a political committee. *See* 11 CFR 100.5(d) ("an individual's  
8 principal campaign committee . . . becomes a political committee[] when that individual becomes  
9 a candidate pursuant to 11 CFR 100.3").

10 Because the definition of "contribution" under 2 U.S.C. 431(8)(A)(ii) and 11 CFR 100.54  
11 applies to services provided to a political committee "for any purpose" (other than services  
12 specifically excepted by the Act and regulations), the Firm's compensation to you and other  
13 Firm employees for the preparation of the *amicus* brief free of charge to the Wallace Committee  
14 would be a "contribution." Accordingly, the Firm's payment of compensation to you and other  
15 Firm personnel for such services would be an impermissible corporate contribution to the  
16 Wallace Committee, unless the Wallace Committee pays the usual and normal charge for such  
17 services in a timely manner. *See* 11 CFR 100.52(d) and 116.3(b).

18 In Advisory Opinion 1980-4 (Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee), on which you  
19 rely in your request, the Commission applied a previous version of 11 CFR 100.54 (11 CFR  
20 100.4(a)(5) (1977)). Although the relevant definition of "contribution" in the Act (2 USC

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cash on hand, rather than have Mr. Wallace establish a legal expense fund.

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Wallace's use of a radio ad to publicize his campaign and his statements referring to himself as a candidate indicate that he was well beyond "testing the waters" for a candidacy when the *amicus* brief was prepared and filed with the court. Nevertheless, even if he were treated as a "potential candidate," in the same position as an individual testing the waters, funds received and spent for such purposes are subject to the limitations and

1 431(8)(A)) was amended in early 1980 to include compensation paid by one person for personal  
2 services of another that are rendered to a political committee without charge "for any purpose,"  
3 *see* Pub. L. No. 96-187, 93 Stat. 1339 (1980), the Commission had not yet amended its  
4 regulations to reflect the amended statute. Accordingly, in Advisory Opinion 1980-4 the  
5 Commission stated that "Commission regulations indicate that contributions in the form of  
6 compensation occur when the compensated services consist of 'political activity,' *i.e.*, services  
7 engaged in for the purposes of influencing an election to Federal office." The Commission  
8 concluded that a contribution did not result in Advisory Opinion 1980-4 because the  
9 compensation paid for legal services that enabled the political committee in question to present a  
10 defense to a complaint alleging violations outside the purview of the Act, as distinguished from  
11 permitting compensated personnel to engage in the political committee's political activities.

12 The Commission's conclusion here, by contrast, rests on the implementation of the Act as  
13 reflected in current Commission regulations, which specify that a contribution results from "the  
14 payment of any person of compensation for the personal services of another person which are  
15 rendered to a political committee without charge *for any purpose.*" 11 CFR 100.54 (emphasis  
16 added). The Commission need not and does not address whether the legal services described by  
17 the requestor are "for the purpose of influencing the election of any person to Federal office."  
18 Due to material differences between the previous and current understanding of the Act and  
19 between the versions of Commission regulations, the Commission determines that Advisory  
20 Opinion 1980-4 does not apply here.

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21  
22 prohibitions of the Act, and are contributions and expenditures subject to the Act's reporting requirements if the individual subsequently becomes a candidate. *See* 11 CFR 100.72 and 100.131.

This response constitutes an advisory opinion concerning the application of the Act and Commission regulations to the specific transaction or activity set forth in your request. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f. The Commission emphasizes that, if there is a change in any of the facts or assumptions presented, and such facts or assumptions are material to a conclusion presented in this advisory opinion, then the requestor may not rely on that conclusion as support for its proposed activity.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Toner  
Chairman

Enclosure (Advisory Opinion 1980-4)